BUREAUCRATIC POLITICS IN THE PACIFIC CAMPAIGN

AN ANALYSIS OF WORLD WAR II CAMPAIGN STRATEGY AS A FUNCTION OF POLITICAL RESULTANTS

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INTRODUCTION

For the casual student of history, the success of the Pacific campaign in World War II suggests a brilliant strategy based on a cohesive allied vision. On closer examination however, this strategy emerges as a flawed collage of compromises developed as a result of a complex process of political bureaucracy. This paper uses Graham T. Allison's governmental politics model as a conceptual framework for analyzing the political and military interactions which led to the development of the Pacific strategy.

THE GOVERNMENTAL POLITICS MODEL

Allison's models range from a "rational" paradigm which views policy as a result of a unitary government process, to the "bureaucratic" paradigm which views policy as a political resultant of a bargaining process between a number of government players (1). This resultant is then "... a mixture of conflicting preferences and unequal power of various individuals-- distinct from what any person or group intended" (2). This process is based on the interaction of key players within the system, each bringing his own power, style, priorities, perceptions, goals and interests to the bargaining process. Interaction between the players is a function of a bargaining process along "action-channels". This model captures the dynamics of the interaction which resulted in the development of the Pacific strategy. The remain-

der of this paper will use this model to analyze the problem which allied planners faced, the action channels, the players themselves, the bargaining process, and finally, the resultant strategy.

THE PROBLEM

Despite the surprise at Pearl Harbor, war with the Japanese was not unexpected. Following World War I, American military staffs had developed the "Rainbow" series of war plans, with "Rainbow Five" in effect at the time of Pearl Harbor. This plan concentrated on defeating Germany first, with the Pacific in the strategic defensive {3}. In the Pacific, a joint Army-Navy board had developed an unrealistic series of plans which envisioned the Army holding out in the Philippines until relieved by the Navy in a dramatic "Jutland-like" engagement with the Japanese fleet {4}.

The fall of the Philippines, and the subsequent success of Japan's Pacific offensive, required that Army and Navy planners rethink the Pacific strategy. It was a critical time--one in which unity of command and vision were critical to the development of a cohesive Pacific strategy. Given the maritime nature of the conflict, a "rational" model would have suggested developing a strategy which adapted Mahan's emphasis on destroying the enemy's fleet and controlling sea lines of communications; with a unified command structure and a single coordinated thrust against the Japanese. In fact, as the bureaucratic model would suggest,

the Pacific strategy was a series of flawed compromises between government and military players.

ACTION CHANNELS

The Pacific strategy emerged as a result of interaction between the governments and military staffs of America, Britain, and Australia; as well as the interaction between American Army and Navy staffs. An overview of the political and military "action channels" is provided in figure 1. At the governmental level, planning conferences provided the key linkage between American and British leaders, with Britain acting as an agent for Australian interests. At the military level, these conferences also provided an opportunity for interaction between the American and British Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) as well as the American-British Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS). In theory, the CCS was responsible for coordinating overall military operations in both the Pacific and European theaters. In practice, operational control of the Pacific theater was vested in the American JCS, since there were no British Naval units in area. Linkage from the Pacific theater commanders to the JCS was provided by operational chains of command, as well as planning conferences. The intense debate which characterized these conferences tended to delay critical decision making, and often resulted in compromise policies which were unacceptable to all the players.

PLAYERS AND ACTION CHANNELS
IN THE PACIFIC CAMPAIGN

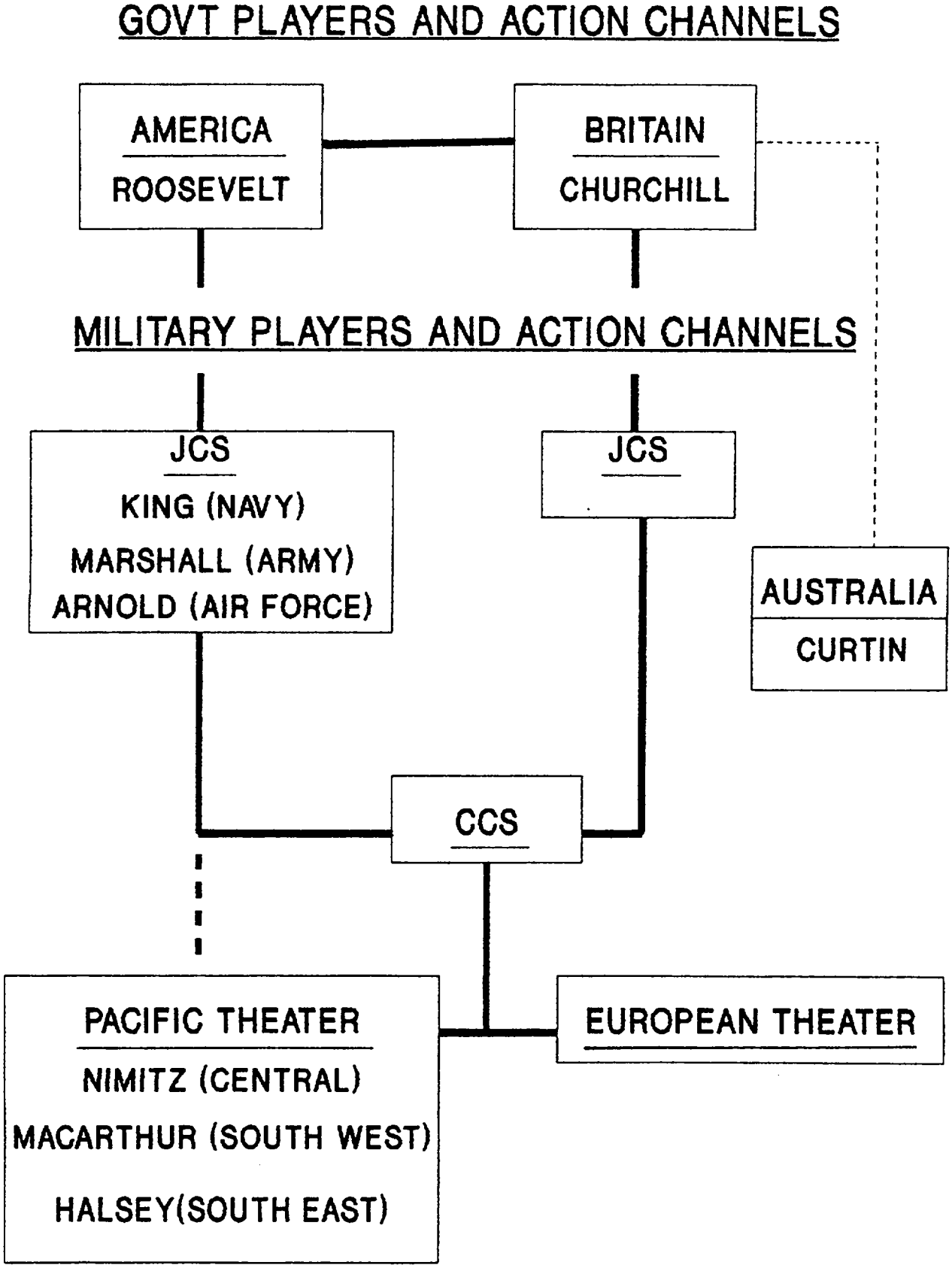


FIGURE 1

GOVERNMENT PLAYERS

Each of the leaders of the allied countries--America's president, Franklin D. Roosevelt (and later Harry S. Truman); Britain's prime minister, Winston Churchill; and Australia's prime minister, John Curtin; had his own national agendas which directly impacted on the development of the Pacific strategy. A simplified summary of these national issues is provided in the upper section of figure 2.

Fortunately for the allies, Roosevelt and Churchill were cut out of the same mold, and enjoyed a close and cooperative relationship. Both men were resolute and inspirational leaders, skilled speakers with tremendous political influence, and for the most part, a common vision with respect to the war's strategy. Curtin, while a dynamic leader, had limited political influence and relied heavily on Churchill to represent Australia's interests. As the most powerful partner in the alliance, and the American commander-in-chief, these national stakes left Roosevelt with a delicate balancing act. Understandably, Churchill argued for defeating Germany first, and Curtin was equally insistent on receiving support in maintaining the sea lines of communication open to Australia and New Zealand, and blunting a potential Japanese invasion (5). Complicating Roosevelt's strategic dilemma was an American public which was thirsty for vengeance after Pearl Harbor, and the significant divergence between Army

GOVT AND INTER-SERVICE ISSUES
IN THE PACIFIC CAMPAIGN

GOVERNMENT ISSUES

	AMERICA	BRITAIN	AUSTRALIA
PRIMARY CONCERNS	DEFEAT AXIS	SURVIVAL	SURVIVAL
	SUPPORT ALLIES	SUPPORT ALLIES	SUPPORT ALLIES
	EUROPE FIRST COMMITMENT	EUROPE FIRST	PACIFIC FIRST
	PUBLIC FOCUS ON PACIFIC		

INTER-SERVICE CONCERNS

	ARMY	NAVY	AIR FORCE
RESOURCE ALLOCATION	EUROPE	PACIFIC	EUROPE
STRATEGIC APPROACH	DEFENSIVE	OFFENSIVE	DEFENSIVE
AREA LEADERSHIP	ARMY	NAVY	
AXIS OF APPROACH	SOUTH	CENTRAL	CHINA MARIANAS
STRATEGIC EMPHASIS	JAPANESE ARMY	JAPANESE FLEET	JAPANESE HOMELAND
JAPANESE SURRENDER	INVASION	BLOCKADE	BOMBING

FIGURE 2

and Navy players on how the Pacific war should be fought.

MILITARY PLAYERS

In many ways the key American military leaders during World War II were alike--each was a career officer with tremendous strength of character, loyalty to service, and professional competency. Unfortunately, there were few other similarities between these leaders, and interaction at Joint planning meetings was usually heated and acrimonious. Development of any kind of cohesive strategy was hindered by inter-service rivalry, doctrinal differences, and strong personality conflicts. A greatly simplified summary of the strategic approach advocated by each service is provided in the lower section of figure 2.

The Army Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall, enjoyed considerable influence with Roosevelt, and was perhaps "first among equals" on the JCS. Marshall favored a "Europe first" approach, with maximum emphasis on shipping troops and equipment to the United Kingdom for an invasion of Europe, and the minimum allocation of resources necessary to maintain communications with Australia in the Pacific theater {6}. A similar approach was advocated by Army Air Force General Henry a. Arnold. Arnold saw victory through strategic air bombardment, and bases in England would allow the immediate bombing of German military and industrial targets {7}. The Navy was represented by Admiral Ernest J. .ing, arguably the best strategist of the war. Disliked in Army

circles, his political influence was a close second to Marshall's. King argued for a more aggressive strategy in the Pacific, with strong reinforcements, even at the temporary expense of the European theater. These reinforcements were needed to support the development of a defensive perimeter, and later an offensive island hopping campaign {8}.

At the Pacific theater level, the Army was represented by General Douglas MacArthur, an officer of enormous ambition, popularity, and political influence, who was intensely disliked within Navy circles. MacArthur's vision of conquest in the Pacific consisted of major land battles in the large island masses of the South West Pacific, culminating in the invasion of first the Philippines, then Japan. MacArthur's in-theater Navy counterpart was the somber, and intensely professional, Admiral Chester Nimitz, later joined by the flamboyant and appropriately nick-named Admiral William "Bull" Halsey. Both officers lacked MacArthur's political influence, and relied heavily on King for representing their interests. These men became disciples of King's vision that victory in the Pacific was a function of a central island hopping campaign against smaller Japanese garrisons, with a strategic blockade of the Japanese homeland. This plan provided a better opportunity for threatening Japan's sea lines of communications, and bringing the Japanese fleet to battle {9}. Since adaption of one of these plans would cede de

facto control of the campaign to the other service, neither the Army nor Navy could endorse the other service's proposal {10}. Given the divergence in perspectives and goals of Army and Navy planners, we can begin to understand why the Pacific strategy emerged as a series of compromises in a complex bargaining process.

THE BARGAINING PROCESS

During the initial months of the war, each of the service chiefs pursued a Pacific strategy based on individual service biases, with King sending more ships to the Pacific, and asking for troop and air reinforcements for the garrisoning of Pacific island bases; and Marshall and Arnold concentrating on reinforcing the European theater {11}. Despite Churchill's insistence on giving priority to the European theater, King's position for strengthening the Pacific gained momentum in February of 1942, when Roosevelt agreed to support Curtin's request for the American defense of Australia and New Zealand. During the course of the war, four major strategic compromises were agreed to by the Combined and Joint Staffs.

The first compromise involved the "Europe first" decision. King's proposal for the accelerated reinforcement of the Pacific was outvoted by Marshall and Arnold in March of 1943. Marshall had strengthened the Army's position when Roosevelt approved his "Marshall Memorandum", a document which stated that prompt action

in Europe was necessary to prevent the defeat of the British and Soviets {12}. Marshall had rallied British support in order to influence Roosevelt's decision, and Churchill's endorsement of the plan marked an end to British interests in expanding the war in the Pacific {13}. Despite Marshall's apparent victory, war in Europe never gained a clear priority, and the tremendous influence that King and MacArthur had on both Roosevelt and the JCS was reflected in the balance of American Army strength not shifting to the European theater until late 1943 {14}.

The second compromise concerned the leadership for the Pacific theater. Conventional wisdom dictated appointment of a single supreme commander in the Pacific, and that given the geography of the area, that this leader should be a Naval officer. Such a step was unacceptable to the Army due to the irreconcilable doctrinal differences with the Navy. Moreover, because of his popularity and seniority, the Army felt that MacArthur would be the logical choice for this command. This option was equally unacceptable to the Navy, who viewed MacArthur as a prima donna with an unimpressive track record {15}. Eventually, the Joint Chiefs reached a compromise solution, dividing the theater into a South-West Pacific region under MacArthur, and a Northern and Central region under Nimitz. Each commander would receive orders through their respective service chiefs, with technically no common superior {16}.

The third compromise concerned the development of an offensive after the crushing Japanese defeat at Midway in June of 1942. The earlier decision to create two independent theaters of operation in the Pacific created a new problem-- which region would be the primary zone for the offensive against Japan? Again, inter-service rivalries emerged. Nimitz argued for the "Navy Plan"-- an island hopping thrust across the Central Pacific, while MacArthur advocated the "Army Plan"--a drive from the South-West Pacific through the Dutch East Indies Islands. The choice of routes implied subordinating one service to another, an unacceptable option to either service. Again, after stormy debate, a compromise was reached in July 1942-- the Southern route was chosen and divided into two regions. The Navy and Marines under Halsey were assigned the objective of advancing through the Solomons Islands; and the Army, under MacArthur, was assigned the objective of advancing into New Guinea {17}. King was absolutely unwilling to trust Navy carriers to an Army general, and as a result, MacArthur had to rely on General George Kenney's 5th Air force for most of his air support during the campaign {18}. The Pacific strategy was further complicated when King, over MacArthur's objection, finally gained approval for the Navy's Central Pacific Island hopping campaign at the Casablanca conference in January of 1943 {19}.

The fourth compromise concerned the final strategy for achiev-

ing Japan's defeat. Despite Nimtz's and Air Force General Curtis LeMay's assertion that a strategic blockade and air offensive would defeat Japan, pressure from MacArthur and Marshall resulted in the development of plans for the invasion of the Japanese mainland {20}. These plans were developed despite estimates of over a million American casualties. In the end, neither the Army nor Navy Plan was implemented. President Truman, responding to increasing domestic pressure for a quick end to the war, authorized the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August of 1945. Japan's subsequent capitulation resulted in cancellation of the Army's invasion plan, as well as cessation of the Navy's blockade and Air Force's bombing campaign.

THE OUTCOME

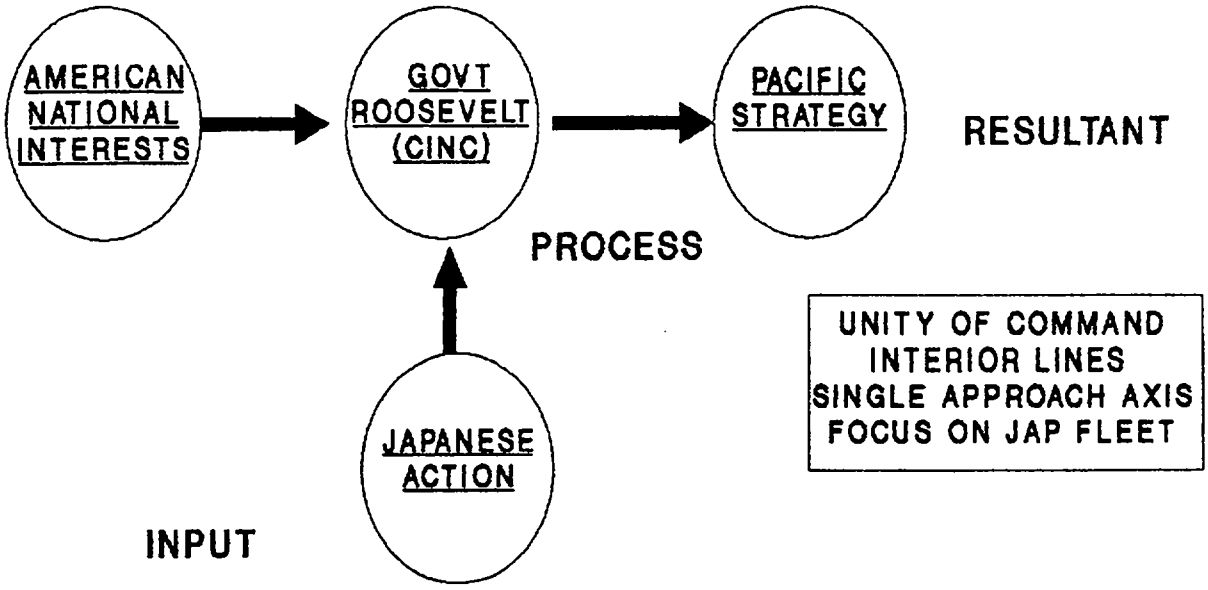
When viewed within the framework of Allison's bureaucratic politics model, the Pacific strategy in World War II can be seen as a political resultant of a complex bargaining process between allied military leaders and military staffs, as well as American Army and Navy leaders. The strategy which evolved as a result of this process represented a collage of compromises attributable to differences in National perspective and military doctrine, as well as intense inter-service rivalry. This inter-service rivalry also delayed critical decision making during the war. As one historian put it "... Army and Air Force generals and Admirals pitted the interests of their rival services over a decision

about the development of the Pacific war" {21}. A comparison of a strategy which might have emerged as a resultant of a "rational" model with the actual resultant is provided in figure 3.

That the Pacific strategy was flawed is difficult to dispute--it violated the principle of unity of command, identified conflicting enemy centers of gravity, dispersed assets, and gave the enemy interior lines. The result was a series of poorly coordinated, and at times costly, land and sea battles. At the battle of Leyte Gulf, the dual chains of command and dual service objectives in the Pacific almost proved fatal when Admiral Halsey left MacArthur's amphibious transports unprotected in order to pursue a Japanese decoy force. This situation would have been far less likely to have developed had there been a supreme Pacific commander and a unitary military objective. It can be argued that indecisiveness and lack of cohesive objectives could have allowed the Japanese to defeat the Americans in detail, concentrating forces to meet first one threat, than the other. In the end, a cohesive Pacific strategy became less and less important, as America's enormous industrial capability allowed overwhelming resources to be allocated against the Japanese. This overwhelming industrial capability proved to be the key factor in the Pacific campaign.

RESULTANT STRATEGY IN THE PACIFIC CAMPAIGN

RATIONAL MODEL



BUREAUCRATIC POLITICS MODEL

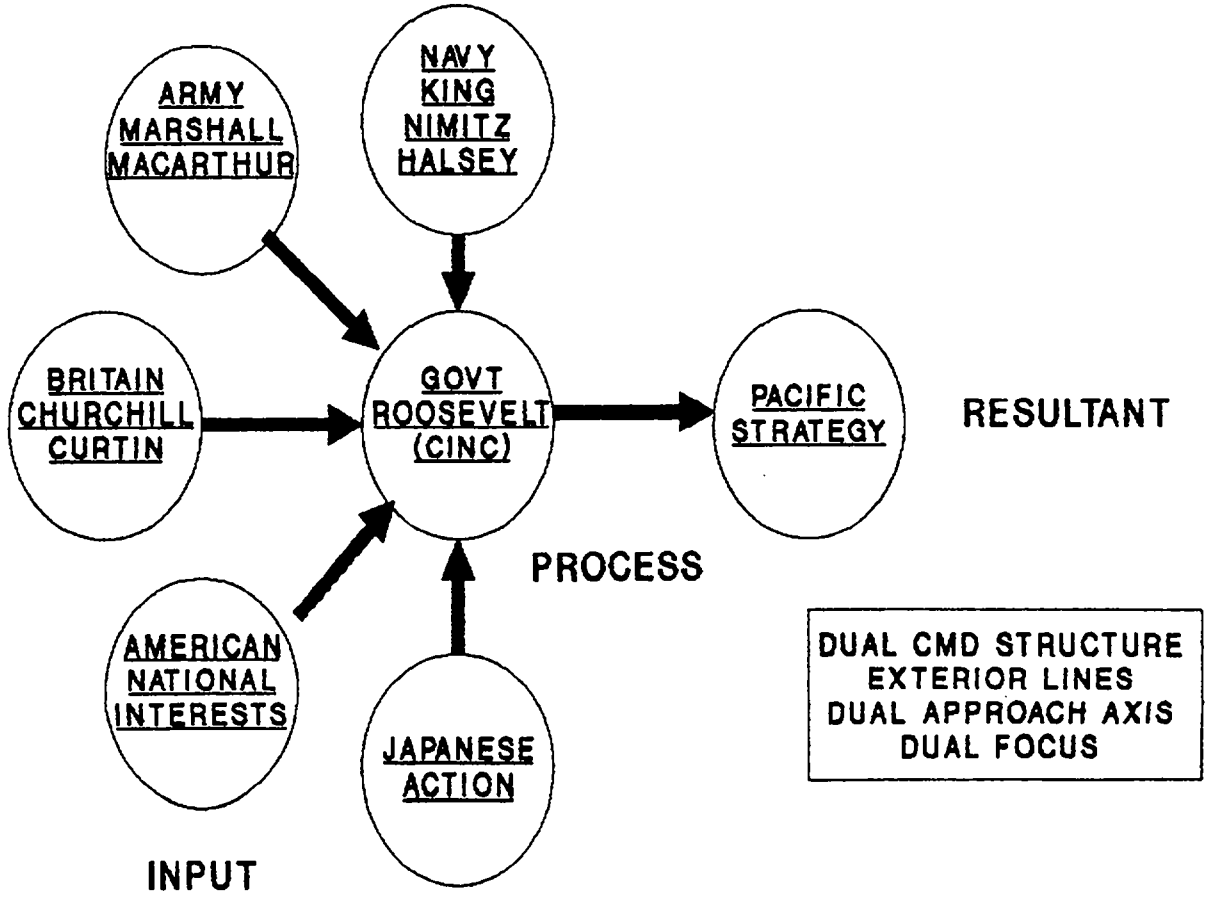


FIGURE 3

SUMMARY

Given Allison's model, the compromise nature of the Pacific strategy was predictable--their were simply too many players of equal influence in the complex government and military action channels for the development of a cohesive vision. Flawed strategies based on compromises do not usually when campaigns, and only America's industrial might prevented the Japanese from maintaining the offensive initiative which they had seized in the Pacific. Given America's shrinking industrial and economic base, future wars may not be so forgiving. Joint service understanding, cooperation, and doctrine are the keys to developing effective strategies to meet future threats. Inter-service rivalries must be subordinated to a cohesive vision, and strategies must embrace the principal of unity of command. This cooperation and unity of vision is critical if we wish to obtain a "rational" rather than a "bureaucratic" approach to government policy and strategic planning.

NOTES

1. Graham T. Allison, Essence of Decision, HarperCollins, 1971, pp. 162-184.
2. Ibid., p. 145.
3. Richard B. Frank, Guadalcanal, Random House, 1990, p. 6.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 10.
6. Ibid., p. 9.
7. Ibid., p. 8.
8. Ibid., p. 9.
9. John Keegan, The Second World War, Viking, 1989, p. 290.
10. Ibid., p. 274.
. Richard B. Frank, Guadalcanal, Random House, 1990, p. 8.
12. Ibid., p. 15.
13. Ibid.
14. Russell F. Weigley, The American Way of War, Indiana University Press, 1977, p. 271.
15. Richard B. Frank, Guadalcanal, Random House, 1990, p. 13.
16. John Keegan, The Second World War, Viking, 1989, p. 291.
17. Ibid., p. 297.
18. Russell F. Weigley, The American Way of War, Indiana University Press, 1977, p. 280.
19. John Keegan, The Second World War, Viking, 1989, p. 291.
J. Ibid., p. 574.